

## AUGUST 2023 NEWSLETTER: SERVING THE POOR

### A Guard the Gospel Bible Study

This study was originally written by Douglas Jacoby and has been adapted by Mark Timlin. There are over 2,000 references to poverty in the Bible and when you add in social justice this grows to nearly 3,000. In keeping with James 4:17 lets us not be guilty of the sin of omission.



Community in Gumine, Central Highlands, Papua New Guinea

### Part of the Christian Mission

- Matt 28: 18-20. The 'Great Commission' directs Christians to seek and save the lost.
- Matt 25: 31-46. The 'Great Compassion' directs Christians to seek and serve the poor.
- 1 Thess 5:23. Encourages care for the 'whole' person (spirit, soul, and body).
- Gal 2:10. Describes evangelism partnering with serving the poor. Like Jesus, the Apostle Paul had a passion to change the world: to preach the gospel and to encourage the poor. When Paul met with the Jerusalem leaders in 48AD, their concern was the same as his, to remember the poor as the gospel was preached to the Jews and Gentiles.



Left to Right: sick child in Afghanistan in a HOPE hospital, Woman receiving food aid in Papua New Guinea, Afghan child in a school built by HOPE

### God's people are called to care because God cares

- Psalm 82:3-4. Describes Gods compassion and action on behalf of the poor.
- Isaiah 58. Describes true fasting and involves caring and advocating for the poor.
- Exodus 34:6 Describes the character of God: Compassionate and gracious, slow to anger...

- Psalm 113. Illustrates God's hand-up to the poor.
- 2 Cor 8:9. God's care is exemplified in Christ who sacrificed position and status, connecting with the poor. This chapter is an exhortation to have a heart for the poor- in this case, needy Judean Christians.
- Luke 10:27-29. Tells us to love God first, our neighbour second. It cautions redefining "neighbour". Jesus challenged such thinking in the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- James 2:1-13. Tells us to not show favouritism towards the rich.
- James 1:27. God gives attention to the distressed- orphans and widows. Our religion is unacceptable to God if we do not share this concern. As Jesus said in Matt 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful."
- Act 9:36-43. Commends Tabitha for helping the poor. She is one of the few people who is returned from death. She was much needed in the church.
- Acts 10:31. Commends Cornelius for his gifts to the poor. He was the first of many Gentile-converts to Christianity.

### Further passages on poverty and materialism

- Psalm 39. Chasing riches is a vain pursuit. Don't be lured by the materialistic message of the world.
- Proverbs 19:17. The Lord blesses those who remember the needy.
- Ezekiel 16:48-49. Materialism numbs our social conscience and blinds us to the needs of others.
- Matt 10:8b. Since we have received freely, we ought also to give freely.
- 1 Tim 6:17-18. While it is not necessarily wrong to be rich, those with wealth must be generous, not stingy. After all, Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23). To be balanced, however, all of us are called to share what we have, not just the rich (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32). Selfishness and materialism are not only a disease of the rich.
- Hebrews 13:5. When we keep our lives free from the love of money, we will be in a much stronger position to be a source of spiritual and physical blessing to others.



*Left to Right: Children in Gumine with HOPE volunteers, Children in Afghanistan collecting water.*

### Some areas in which we can serve

- Start off by serving at home, if not already (1 Tim 5:8).
- Meet needs in your spiritual family and branch outwards (Gal 6:10).
- Feed the hungry. Both testaments urge us to see to this need, even when the hungry person is our enemy! (2 Kings 6:21-23, Matt 5:43-48)
- Visit prisoners. Hebrews 13 presumably refers to Christians in prison for their faith, though compassion for fellow human beings is not limited to people of faith.
- Clothe the naked. Naked means insufficiently dressed.
- Build a house (join a HOPE volunteer trip). If this is too big a task, help to clean one!
- Adopt a child. Millions of children need adoption. If this is too big a task offer to foster or mind a child.
- Encourage the elderly. Many seniors live in prison-like isolation.
- Sell possessions and give to the poor.
- Visit a country in the developing world and take your friends and/or family.
- Assist in disaster relief.
- Invite the poor into your home.
- Fast and pray for the needy.
- Comfort orphans and widows.
- Provide medical care to the poor.
- Reach out to refugees.

## Thought Questions

1. Am I substituting giving money for active involvement in serving the poor?
2. Is there an elderly person living on my street that I haven't visited?
3. Do I agree with: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care"?
4. When was the last time I ate in a poor person's home, or they in my home?
5. Am I ready to study out what the Bible says about the poor? Be sure to read James, Luke and Acts, as poverty and possessions are major themes. See also Proverbs, as well as the Prophets.
6. Are there any lifestyle changes I need to make because of this study?

## "I WAS HUNGRY!"

*You fed my food to your pigs  
You blamed it on the markets  
You blamed it on the Marxists  
You told me the poor were blessed  
You really did mean to write to your local MP  
You used me as a dumping ground for your food mountain  
You promised to pray for me  
You were sure I could manage on welfare  
You switched the channel to avoid the sight of me  
You paid a pittance for my harvest  
You sold my government arms to keep me quiet  
You used my land to grow flowers for your table  
You told me to get lost.*

*(I Was Hungry, a British poem, adapted)*

## Recommended reading:

1. R. J. Sider, *Rich Christians Living in an Age of Hunger*. The classic work.
2. Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*. Urges balance and sacrifice.
3. D. A. Jacoby & D. R. Arthur, *I Was Hungry!*
4. Shane Claiborne, *Irresistible Revolution*. Popular and powerful.
5. David Platt, *Radical*. Ideas for how churches can inculcate compassion for the poor.
6. The Hole in our Gospel. Richard Stearns.



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